

The Builder.

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SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1850.



A old professional friend who lives a hundred miles from London, and had rattled up to give evidence in a railway compensation case, looked in last night for half-an-hour's gossip about things in general, and architecture in particular. Although of the old school, he is one of those who fully appreciate the intellectual stir of the day, and anticipate great things from it in due time. So far from pooh-poohing young men and their "wild visions,"—insisting on rigorous adherence to precedent,—and discouraging that freedom of thought which is beginning to show itself amongst them, he looks to them hopefully, agreeing with those who think that the destinies of a nation depend upon its boys. He would like to see a little less dippancy and self-conceit in some cases, but, as he good-naturedly says, when their knowledge increases, their own deficiencies will become more apparent, and they will view with greater consideration the short-comings of others. "It is not because I have been five-and-forty years in the profession," he says, "that I am to expect implicit assent to all my opinions, and blind deference to all my suggestions, on the part of those who are but now entering it: fashions have changed, though principles are permanent, views are extended, facilities are greater; the little that the youngsters do know is all in accordance with the present state of knowledge, and it is easier for them to advance on that than for one who has already run a race, and would perhaps have to 'try back' at starting."

Our friend has never joined the Institute, because of the narrow clause which makes measuring for artificers a disqualification: he has given up this part of his practice for these five years past (a thing not easy to do in the country), but he protests, very justly, against this ground of exclusion, and on principle will not join the body. Nevertheless, he regards it with great interest, and nearly his first inquiry was to know what had been done at the meeting on Monday evening last. "They sadly want a better room," he remarked. "I attended a meeting last session, when Earl de Grey was presiding in his pleasant way, and had neither seat nor air for two mortal hours. Government ought to find them rooms; but as, perhaps, this is not likely, a coalition should be formed with other societies, and a fitting building erected for their joint use. And now tell me what was done. Did the meeting confirm the report of the council, or had your gentle remonstrance last week any effect?"

The report was not considered. When the honorary secretary was about to read the document for consideration, Mr. Thomson suggested that this was not necessary, giving the council a hint that it had already caused annoyance enough without repetition, and he then moved its confirmation.—Mr. Pownall equally deplored its severity, and seconded the proposition.—Mr. Wild thought it should be read.—Mr. Donaldson defended the report: not giving a medal was a loss to the Institute,

be considered; the council had not determined on that report without extreme regret, but were impelled to it by a sense of duty.—Mr. Berry, jun., on the part of young members like himself, wished to urge upon the council that the competitors would necessarily be students, and that perfect works should not be looked for.—Finding that the discussion was likely to interfere with the business of the evening, the consideration of the subject was referred to a special meeting, to be held next Monday, when a second report from the council, on the disqualification clause, will also be brought up, which we may expect will recommend, in deference to the opinion of the last special meeting, some modification, at all events, of the objectionable and injurious regulation.

"Well," said our friend, "I sincerely hope that the council will, after all, be persuaded to vote a medal to one of the competitors. They must have given much time to the endeavour, and should be encouraged to future efforts."

One of our correspondents, we remarked, who signs himself "An Unsuccessful Competitor," but (very properly) does not identify his design, states that he gave much thought, and the whole of his leisure time for nearly five months, to the exclusion of all other study, in the preparation of his drawings. He continues—"The time that I have spent over the drawings I do not regret, further than I begin to doubt whether it would not have been more profitably employed in studying some of the many branches of knowledge which it is necessary to master fully to understand our noble art; for I feel aware that a lifetime is hardly sufficient to acquire a competent knowledge of it, much less the scanty time of an artied clerk; but still, as I strove my best (though that best was perhaps trifling), my defeat shall only inspire me with more ardour to pursue that path to which you constantly exhort us." This is the right feeling, is n't it?

To continue, however, as to the Institute: the medals for next year are offered for the best essay "On the Distinctive Style of Inigo Jones," the best essay "On rendering Houses Fire-proof," and the best design for "Public Baths and Laundries." The paper of the evening was on some remarkable Brick Buildings of the Mediæval Period in the north-east of Germany and on the Coast of the Baltic, by Mr. Charles Fowler, the younger, of which you will see notes in *THE BUILDER* hereafter. It was very discreetly written and modestly delivered.

Mr. Smirke pointed out the great neglect of brickwork in England, and showed how much more intelligently, so to speak, this material was used through Germany.—Mr. Fowler, senior, confirmed this by some instances.

"Once get the brick duty off, as you have already said," urged our companion, "and improvement in the use of the material will be certain to follow. Only those who have themselves seen the hovels in which the rural poor live, and the demoralisation resulting from the want of separate sleeping-rooms, can rightly appreciate the importance of removing this impost, which increases so immensely the cost of decent dwellings. Apropos of Mr. Fowler, whose name you mentioned, the verdict in his case, reported last week, was surely unjust, and contrary to the summing up of the Chief Baron."

* Messrs. James Bull, Andrew Mooney, and John Whitchord, were removed from the class of Associates to that of Fellows; and Frederick Lawford was elected an Associate.
—See p. 79, ante.

It unquestionably seems so. The amount of outlay on which the commission was to be paid was fixed at 40,000*l.*, to carry out the design so far as then determined on; but this surely did not justify the magistrates when they determined on further works—works not contemplated by the original drawings, but additional—in refusing to pay the architect for his trouble in designing and superintending them.

"Competitions seem always to bring trouble. By the way, can you tell me anything about the designs submitted for St. Thomas's Church, Newport? A friend of mine, resident in Cork, has written me a letter on the subject, which does not agree at all with the statement in your journal of January the 12th. He says,—

"A young lad, who has been a couple of years assistant in an architect's office in this city (Cork), stated publicly some time since that he had furnished plans for a new church (St. Thomas, Newport), which plans had won the premium of 50*l.* A perspective design has been lithographed and extensively circulated in Cork, under which is printed—'New Church of Saint Thomas, Newport; John Jones, Architect. This design won the first premium of 50*l.*' The design is a mere copy, and such as, I am sure, could not succeed in any reasonable competition, where talent of any pretension is exhibited. I should like to know the truth of the matter, and if the 'boy Jones' is revelling in a reputation surreptitiously obtained, it is but due to all parties to expose the matter."

Has the matter been decided? continued our visitor.

Of the lithograph you speak of we know nothing; certainly, however, no such name as Jones was amongst the favourites, and the decision has only just now been made in favour of Mr. Daukes, by a majority of twelve to eight. Some of the opponents of the successful competitor say they intend to remember that he has stated his design could be carried out for 6,000*l.*

"Ah, the old story, I suppose. And what about the competition for re-arranging that very interesting church in Norwich,—St. Peter's, Mancroft,—advertised in *THE BUILDER*, a few weeks since?"

That also has been decided. The plans sent in were numerous, and the committee, on Tuesday in last week, selected one by Mr. R. M. Phipson, as best adapted to their views. The estimate of the entire expense here is given as 1,550*l.*, and it is intended to commence at the east end of the church, and progress westward as subscriptions flow in. It appears that the Rev. Charles Turner, Minister of St. Peter's, Mancroft, although a subscriber of 20*l.* towards the fund, stated that as the sum required exceeded 1,200*l.* (the amount contemplated), he would become an additional donor of 50*l.* if the requisite number of other donors would join him with similar sums. According to the design, the upper part of both aisles will be separated by parclose screens, and the organ will be removed within the arch at the west end. Our informant, I may tell you, says that it is proposed to establish a society at Norwich, on the plan of the Cannynge Society, at Bristol, to aid in obtaining the complete restoration of this church.

"And what have they determined on at Bradford with regard to the plans for the new workhouse there?"

Why there also they have come to a determination. After long battling on most unsound points, the Committee have decided in favour of a design by Messrs. Lockwood and